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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IT](#) [IZ](#) [IRAQI](#) [FREEDOM](#)

SUBJECT: TFIZO1: ITALY EXPELS FOUR IRAQI DIPLOMATS AND STAFF

REF: A. SECSTATE 75557

[B](#). ROME 1205

[C](#). ROME 1173

[D](#). SECSTATE 72921

CLASSIFIED BY: CLASSIFIED BY DCM EMIL SKODON FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1. (S) ON MARCH 25 GOI MFA CONFIRMED TO US DETAILS OF ITS EXPULSION OF FOUR IRAQI DIPLOMATS. TWO (THIRD SECRETARY ALI RIFAT AND ATTACHE MOHAMMED HUMADI) HAVE DEPARTED ROME FOR AMMAN. TWO STAFF MEMBERS (TAHER AHMED AND ABDULLAH HUMADI) WERE OUT OF ITALY WHEN DECISION WAS MADE AND WILL NOT BE ALLOWED IN. IRAQI INTEREST SECTION REMAINS "OPEN" (THOUGH BARELY FUNCTIONING, ACCORDING TO GOI) UNDER DIRECTION OF CHARGE D'AFFAIRES FARES AL SHOKER, WHO WAS NOT EXPELLED.

2. (SBU) FM FRATTINI ADDRESSED THE ISSUE AT A MARCH 24 JOINT SESSION OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE AND THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, CALLED TO DISCUSS THE MARCH 20-21 EU COUNCIL MEETING ON IRAQ. GIVEN THEIR TIMING, THE EXPULSIONS BECAME PART OF THE PARLIAMENTARY DISCUSSIONS. FRATTINI TOLD THE MP'S THAT THE GOI'S ASSESSMENT OF THE FOUR EXPELLED IRAQIS "DID NOT BEGIN AS A RESULT OF THE AMERICAN REQUESTS, BUT IT CONCLUDED AFTER THESE REQUESTS" ADDING THAT "THESE FOUR PERSONS WERE CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES INCOMPATIBLE WITH THEIR DIPLOMATIC STATUS."

3. (SBU) THE CENTER-LEFT OPPOSITION CITED THE EXPULSIONS TO ACCUSE THE GOI OF "SERVILE BEHAVIOR" TOWARD THE U.S., CHOOSING (ONCE AGAIN) TO PORTRAY GOI ACTION NOT AS A MATTER OF SECURITY OR INTELLIGENCE COOPERATION, BUT AS "AN ACT OF WAR." CENTER-LEFT ARGUMENTS RANGED FROM ACCUSATIONS THAT THE GOI "LACKED CLARITY" IN ITS IRAQ POLICY TO CALLS FOR PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL OF "MEASURES TAKEN IN...DECLARED WAR," BUT FOCUSED MOST ON ALLEGED GOI "ACCEPTANCE OF U.S.

DICTIONARIES." THE ARGUMENTS WERE EVEN MORE EGREGIOUSLY POLITICAL THAN USUAL IN ITALIAN POLITICAL RHETORIC, AS WITNESSED BY THE PUBLIC REFUSAL OF FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER AND CURRENT OLIVE TREE COALITION SENATOR LAMBERTO DINI TO CONCUR. DINI AVERRED THAT "EVERY COUNTRY HAS THE RIGHT TO EXPEL THOSE DIPLOMATS THAT UNDERTAKE ACTIVITIES INCOMPATIBLE WITH THEIR DIPLOMATIC STATUS, SUCH AS ESPIONAGE."

4. (C) COMMENT: THE OPPOSITION'S RESPONSE TO THE IRAQI EXPULSIONS IS PAR FOR THEIR COURSE, IF SOMEWHAT MORE BLATANT THAN USUAL. BEING "AGAINST THE WAR" IS THE ONE ISSUE THAT PUTS THE CENTER-LEFT ON THE SIDE OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE ITALIAN PUBLIC -- ALTHOUGH IT IS FAR FROM CLEAR WHO IS LEADING, AND WHO IS FOLLOWING, WHOM. OPPOSITION INTERLOCUTORS CONTINUE TO INSIST THAT THEY REMAIN OUR FRIENDS, AND IN OUR VIEW THEY ARE NOT BEING ENTIRELY DISINGENUOUS WHEN THEY SAY SO. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF COMMUNIST RENEWAL (RC) AND OTHER FAR-LEFT ELEMENTS, OPPOSITION LEADERS REGULARLY POINT OUT THAT OPPOSITION TO THE ATTACK ON IRAQ SHOULD NOT BE COUPLED WITH ANTI-AMERICANISM. STILL, THE POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED BY THE EXPULSIONS APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN JUST TOO EASY -- AND TOO JUICY -- TO PASS UP (PRINCIPLES AND ARGUMENTATION ASIDE).
SEMBLER

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